

5-Step
IPM Process



Strategy Team Monthly Newsletter #2

Hello to our GREFC family! We hope you are all enjoying the warm summer days and keeping yourselves (and your lawns, gardens and pets) hydrated.

This is the second newsletter from GREFC's Strategic Planning Team. In our first newsletter, we talked about our vision and our first steps in embarking on nudging our culture towards our vision (if you missed the first newsletter, you can

find it on the brochure rack near the Welcome Center). In today's newsletter we'll discuss our definition of a Mature Disciple, the Discipleship Pathway, and two types of churches. But first, we'll talk about how our Strategic Planning fits into the IPM Process.

The IPM Process

We hired Interim Pastor Ministries (IPM) to help us through the process of finding a Senior Pastor. IPM provides not only a preaching pastor, but this same pastor is a consultant that works with a church through a 5-step process that addresses church health and guides them in finding a new pastor.

Pastor Ron Weller came to us in January, 2021, and embarked on the 5-step process which included:

1) Interviews with attenders, 2) A Transition Team that focused on determining the church's strengths and weaknesses, 3) Facilitate Action where the Transition Team addressed any areas needing improvement, 4) Strategic Planning, and 5) the Pastoral Search Team.

Since we had already been doing strategic planning, we just continued as part of the IPM process, and these newsletters are our attempt at keeping everyone informed of what we're doing.

Mature Disciple

After defining our vision and our first attempts at moving our church culture to be more oriented around disciple making, we started asking ourselves, "When we are achieving our vision and our strategy is working, how would we know when we've succeeded? What traits would a mature disciple exhibit?" Once we defined this, we could then work backwards to determine how we would help get a person to that point.

We decided that five key traits, or markers, defined what we thought a mature disciple maker of Jesus Christ would look like. We added a question with each trait that would give someone a "mirror" to help gauge if they were consistently exhibiting this trait in their life. We understand that there are other traits of maturity, but we felt these five were the most important in our context.

The five markers of a mature disciple are:

- **Intimacy with God:** Am I daily deepening my relationship with God and eager to spend time with Him through Scripture, prayer and worship?
- **Jesus-like Love:** Am I ready and willing to Biblically love and engage with anyone God brings before me including those hard to love?
- **Disciple-Making Lifestyle:** Am I in intentional faith-building relationships with believers or unbelievers (beyond family) helping them grow into disciple-makers?
- **Life-Altering Church Relationships:** Do I have deep relationships within the church that I believe are vital to my spiritual health?
- **Joyful & Sacrificial Serving:** Do I freely give the first fruits of my time to serving, even when difficult or inconvenient?

We recognize that one never really “arrives” at maturity. These five markers are meant to be aspirational goals for everyone. But they do help us define what we are reaching for.

Discipleship Pathway: Connect – Equip - Serve - Go

We fully understand that as a church we cannot make people move to maturity. It takes a movement of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life and their willingness to follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit to make this happen. However, once the Spirit is at work in a person’s life, we felt leadership could do a better job at facilitating growth by providing an easily understood framework that would help people take logical next steps toward maturity.

We determined that our framework would include four important structures. These would not be linear structures, going from one to the other in sequence. They would be inter-dependent. As a person engaged in one area, it would spur them on to engage with the other structures. We believe that we need to be engaged in all four structures to reach maturity as a disciple maker. The four structures are Connect, Equip, Serve and Go.

Connect: Connecting with others in intentional and intimate relationships is vital to our maturity and develops unity in our church body. Our Community Group model, the way we initially had it structured, was not resulting in the maturity we were hoping to see and needed to be changed. Community Groups are very good at fostering those deeper relationships that people so desperately need, but we will make changes to how we train leaders to help facilitate more spiritual discussions within the large group time. In addition to Community Groups, we will also offer a smaller (2-4 member) group size to achieve that much needed life-on-life disciple making, what we’re calling Micro Groups and Mentoring Groups.

Equip: People need to know the Bible well and be engaging in it regularly. But people also must learn skills that will help them develop into a mature disciple maker. We plan to put a bigger emphasis on equipping, not just leaders but every person in the church. We will continue to offer training in Biblical studies, however, Bible studies, while very valuable, do not necessarily equip people in learning the skill of evangelism, in theology, in disciple making, in spiritual giftings, nor in church health and what it means to be a fully functioning member of a church family.

Serve: Jesus came to serve and we fully believe that serving, out of delight in God and others, will move one toward being a mature disciple maker. We plan to make each serving opportunity in our church a richer experience that draws people toward Jesus with a much larger emphasis on prayer and relationships. We will encourage sacrificially serving not only in church but also in our community.

Go: Jesus called us to go and make disciples. We plan to help people be missionaries in their neighborhoods and relationships. We plan to put systems in place that offer opportunities and training for people to be evangelists in their everyday lives.

In our upcoming newsletters we'll talk more in depth about each of these action areas: Connect, Equip, Serve and Go.

We feel that when people are fully engaging in each of these structures, they will have a greater opportunity to move toward maturity. However, we also acknowledged that one could be operating in each structure and still not grow. It all depends on where their focus is.

An Issue of the Heart

"Church" means many things to many people. But it usually falls into one of two categories: You can "do" church, or you can "be" the Church. Let's break those two categories down a little.

"Doing" Church

This is a mentality that is pervasive in America. It can be typified by comments like these:

- "I wasn't really fed by the message this morning."
- "I wish they would play more hymns during worship."
- "They have a great kid's program here!"
- "I hope they do that new Bible study that just came out."

The focus of "doing" church is ourselves. We do the things of church and rate a church by how effective it is on keeping us content. People who "do" church are simply consumers of religious goods and services. When their needs are not met, they move on to another church.

A consumer church can have great attendance and healthy giving. It can have active ministries with many people participating in ministry events. A consumer church can look like it's thriving! However, there are telling symptoms associated with being a consumer church:

- Difficulty filling serving positions in church ministries
- Low turnout to trainings
- Lots of resources allocated to Sunday morning services
- Silo ministries
- Biblical illiteracy
- Lack of vision and lack of passion about the vision
- Very little life transformation happening
- High turnover of attenders
- Very little difference of attenders from the surrounding culture

Being the Church

Being the church means having a focus on God and what He wants us to be doing. God's church is focused primarily on bringing the lost and broken into a relationship with Jesus and transforming lives into the image of Jesus Christ. It is other-focused.

Those who are being the church are cooperating with the Holy Spirit at work in their lives. They place a higher priority on the mission and vision of the Church than on their personal comfort and convenience.

When people buy into being the church, there are symptoms of that, too:

- A high rate of the lost coming to Christ
- Life transformation is seen in many people's lives
- The church is known in the community for being a blessing
- Many are in life-on-life disciple-making relationships leading to transformed lives
- Many graduating students go into ministry professions or become missionaries
- Many people step into leadership positions
- Volunteer spots are filled, and new ministries are started
- Most know and live out the church's vision
- The church multiplies by church planting
- The attenders live lives that are markedly different from the surrounding culture

Be the Church With Us

We deeply care about everyone at GREFC and about our entire community. We want everyone to experience the unparalleled love of Jesus Christ and live lives marked by grace, truth, compassion and love. We want to provide a framework that will help people move to maturity through an easy to understand framework with logical and compelling next steps. We are relying on the Holy Spirit to do the actual changing of people's hearts.

We are asking you all to be the church with us! Please pray with us that God would move us to desire spiritual growth and maturity. That we would be a church known for blessing our community and fostering life transformation. And pray that we would be so unified that those outside our church would notice, and know that God sent His Son! (John 17:20-23)

Our next newsletter will focus on what changes you might expect to see this fall. Until then, enjoy the remaining days of summer and continue praying for us as we move forward.

In His Name,

The Strategic Planning Team